

## Dialogue

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*What's Mine is Yours? Cultural Borrowing in a Pacific Context*

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in a Pacific Context*

*Jane Freeman Moulin*

The theme of a recent musicology conference in Auckland, “Closer Musical Relations,” provided an opportunity to examine the role of music in connecting the world’s peoples and allowed for important reflection about what closer links might mean for music and dance performance in Pacific Island cultures.<sup>1</sup> This article is the revision of a keynote address given at that conference. Although originally intended to stimulate discussion among musicologists, the points raised relate directly to issues of concern to the Pacific and are presented here in the spirit of expanding that discussion across disciplinary boundaries.

Without a doubt, recent technological advances in telecommunications, computer technology, audio or visual storage and retrieval, satellite systems, and electronic networks have shot us forward into a new age—one marked by ideas of a global culture and the widespread dissemination of information to even the most remote areas of the world. Technology has, moreover, brought an immediacy to cross-cultural interaction and an ever-increasing access to musical systems that introduce new and different realms of artistic expression. The potential for a giant mixing of musical instruments, concepts, and practices has never been greater. Some might even argue that the current trends in what is popularly known as “world music” are moving today’s electronically plugged-in audiences ever further along that path of musical convergence.

Scholars today readily accept that the act and the art of making music are intimately bound to the political, economic, and cultural setting of a particular time and place—meaning that the context for musical performance is constantly redefined in reference to the larger social matrix. Cultural contact and exchange are increasingly part of this ongoing process of redefinition, for in that moment of confronting the new and different, performers and audiences alike are prompted to make a number of determinations that influence subsequent performance. Parameters of new or

old, good or bad, ours or theirs, familiar or incomprehensible, interesting or boring, compatible or incompatible, and acceptable or unacceptable are tested and resolved on some level, whether conscious or unconscious, articulated and openly discussed or unvoiced.

The very notion of artistic contact, interaction, and exchange between music and dance cultures also gives rise to challenging questions that are much broader in implication than specific details of sound and movement systems. For example, as the networking world moves into the global century, will there be an unavoidable merging of artistic cultures? Is there a role—even a necessity—for musical distinction in the new “world” society? How are problems of establishing and respecting proprietorship resolved in a context of widespread artistic exchange? Is there a well-defined, mutually understood difference between borrowing and appropriation?

Such questions merit the attention of Pacific residents, performers, and researchers for they are particularly relevant to contemporary Pacific Island music and dance cultures. This process of interaction and the “borrowing” resulting from artistic contact raise important regional issues. Some people are beginning to wonder whether Pacific musics are becoming perhaps *too* closely related.

In examining this topic of intercultural borrowing in the Pacific, the following discussion draws primarily on examples from Eastern Polynesia. The concerns presented here, however, are certainly not restricted to the eastern Pacific—or even the Pacific for that matter. Cultural heritage, cultural property, and cultural rights are topical issues in the global forum.

While an inquiry into the nature of artistic borrowing is the primary focus, the yet broader context for contemplating the very nature and significance of this information is also important. Music not only *reflects* the culture that produced it; ample evidence exists that the arts contribute to *forming* cultures—they are capable of leading the way to change, rather than passively telling what has already transpired.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, this idea of causation and the implied capability for predicting patterns are intriguing. Are music and dance in one sense a crystal ball of culture? And if so, what can be learned from the images that appear? The intent here is therefore twofold: to explore artistic borrowing—the content, process, and outcomes; and to look at the images of this borrowing—the patterns, the trends—and see what they might predict for the near future of Pacific arts.

## PATTERNS OF CULTURAL INTERACTION

In the first half of the twentieth century, scholars of Polynesia were concerned primarily with traditional music and distinguished it from newer, westernized, acculturated forms. Clearly, Christianization, hymn-style composition, the brass band, the guitar, and recorded western popular music have all had tremendous impact across the Pacific. But it is also equally clear that the simplistic categories of island and western or acculturated and traditional must be cast away, mainly because they ignore other forces that influence the music—namely, the importance of intra-Pacific exchange in the performing arts. Fortunately, scholars such as Vilsoni Hereniko (1977),<sup>3</sup> Wayne Laird (1982), Helen Reeves Lawrence (1992), and Richard Moyle (1988), among others, have expanded this earlier model to provide important information about the ways in which artistic interchange among Polynesians in earlier years has molded music and dance forms as they are known today. Allan Thomas's biography of a Tokelau composer (Thomas and Tuia 1990) shows clearly the multiple island influences that form the lives of contemporary Islanders and points to the need to examine these influences further as they occur across the Pacific.

Research into the dynamics of current borrowing practice has a timely element to it, for it is precisely this transportation of music and dance across cultural boundaries that is creating waves of discontent among certain island groups. An exploration of borrowing, therefore, must not only look at the process itself (the what and how of borrowing) but also consider its impact on both the source island and the recipient. And it must address the obvious question of why an age-old practice has only recently become an issue of contention for some Islanders.

Narrowing this exploration to one Polynesian exchange area, I shall focus on three islands that represent related but unique Eastern Polynesian cultures—Rarotonga in the Cook Islands, Tahiti in the Society Islands, and Fatu Hiva in the Marquesas Islands.<sup>4</sup> Spread over a distance of more than sixteen hundred miles from west to east and separated by wide expanses of ocean, these three islands nevertheless interrelate—and in distinctive ways.

To begin with the relationship between the Society Islands and the Cook Islands, the sociocultural links binding these two archipelagoes are especially strong ones—established in precontact years, reinforced with

the Christianizing of the Cooks from the Society Islands in the early nineteenth century, and perpetuated in subsequent years by employment-related migrations, family ties, and visiting cultural, sports, and religious groups. Frequent contact and a pattern of cross-influence mark the interaction between these islands, even though the two groups are politically and culturally distinct. A closely related language, a shared Protestant religion with its strong tradition of congregational hymn singing, and a history of artistic exchange in music and dance all add to an overall feeling of cultural connection. A spirit of artistic competition exists between contemporary performers from the two groups. According to Rarotongan legend, there is nothing new about the "battle" between Tahitian and Cook Island performers; Rarotonga's superiority was firmly established in mythological times (Jonassen 1991b, iii). Drawing inspiration from this legend of a historical contest between the two groups, the 1992 Festival of Pacific Arts in Rarotonga featured a drumming "competition" that pitted the drummers of the Tahitian delegation against their Rarotongan hosts. No winner was formally announced; audience members formed their own opinions about which group outshone the other. The very idea that such an event could be held, however, underscores the point that the two musical systems are considered similar enough to be mutually comprehensible and capable of being judged on compatible criteria.

Interactions between the Society and the Marquesas Islands are very different. These two archipelagoes are politically united as part of French Polynesia, but the association is a forced one—determined and maintained by colonial interests in the Pacific, not by Islander wishes or a feeling of cultural affinity. The Societies and the Marquesas exhibit markedly *dissimilar* cultural features, to the point where language, religion, and culture have more often been barriers than bridges to communication and understanding (Moulin 1994a).

Tahiti is the political and economic center of French Polynesia, the hub from which money, power, and cultural influence radiate outward. Because this is almost exclusively a one-way direction of influence, it is little wonder that Marquesans view Tahitian culture as external and imposed rather than as a set of shared values. Their artistic reaction has been to compartmentalize their indigenous music and dance traditions and to keep them separate from imported Tahitian forms. Marquesans *do* perform Tahitian music, but the contrast with Marquesan musical aesthetics and conventions is so great that performance stands as an overt

statement of Marquesan unwillingness to be submerged in a Tahitian identity (Moulin 1994b, 41–44). Throughout most of the twentieth century, when dominant Tahitian culture and the church effectively squelched indigenous expression, Marquesans did not adapt their own music and modify their artistic identity. Rather, they simply hid their chants and dances away and brought them out only on special occasions (Moulin 1991, 51–55). Adopting Tahitian forms on a superficial level became an acceptable way by which they could continue to perform, but there was never a full-scale move to embrace Tahitian music as their own.

Between the Marquesas and the Cook Islands, there is virtually no direct exchange. Instead, each of these island groups links up with Tahiti in its own pattern of interaction. Cross-fertilization marks the Cook Islands link, while predominantly unidirectional Tahitian influence characterizes Tahiti–Marquesas relations.<sup>5</sup>

In order to explore more fully the type of cultural exchange that occurs in this part of the Pacific, I shall focus on one genre of music and dance performed throughout the region and known today as *'ura pa'u* on Rarotonga, *'ōte'a* on Tahiti, and *tapiriata* on Fatu Hiva. The musical accompaniment for these dances is provided by male musicians who play sequences of named rhythmic patterns on slit-drums and membranophones (Figure 1).

The overall shared traits apparent in the music played by this drum ensemble, such as musical structure and basic instrumentation, find a corollary in the visual realm in terms of a shared dance style. On all three islands, this drumming ensemble accompanies choreographed, large-group dances that feature gender-specific movements. Primary emphasis is on the lower torso and legs, with females executing rapid hip movements and males performing a repeated opening and closing of the knees.

On the general level, similarities in these movements are found throughout the region, and Islanders readily attribute this resemblance in music and dance style to the process of cultural exchange. Although the exact history and detail of that exchange are still cloaked in a number of unknowns, it is unrealistic to view it as a one-time incident occurring at an isolated point in the past. Rather, ongoing contact in the region creates a constant potential for continued sharing in the genre.

The Marquesan *tapiriata* demonstrates a unidirectional pattern of exchange. The dance, described by Marquesans as “new” and of Tahitian origin, has actually been in the Marquesas for well over one hundred



FIGURE 1. The double-membrane *pahu*, the *tō'ere* slit-drum, and the single-membrane *fa'atete* are instruments used to accompany the 'ōte'a. (Jane Moulin)

years and was mentioned by name as early as 1887 (C L R 1887, 47). In tracing the evolution of these dances over time, two important points emerge. First, although there is ongoing updating in the genre to mirror changes that have taken place in Tahiti, a definite time lag occurs before new ideas are incorporated in the Marquesas. Consequently, contemporary Marquesan dances reflect dance formation, choreography, individual movements, costuming, and musical accompaniment that look somewhat old-fashioned in Tahitian eyes. Some Marquesan villages, for example, retain the tin-can drum, an instrument discarded by Tahitians more than thirty years ago.<sup>6</sup> Second, although the general development of the dance reflects that of Tahiti, there is a tendency to localize the performance by incorporating Marquesan visual motifs. When special headdresses are worn, for example, they are based on Marquesan rather than Tahitian models (Figure 2). The same occurs with other costume parts, wherein an idea is adopted but manipulated in somewhat different ways. For example, a *pareu* skirt might be made of bark cloth decorated with Marquesan tattoo patterns (Figure 2).

Similarly, the presence of comparable instruments does not imply uniformity in the way they are used. On Tahiti, a solo slit-drum leads off the rhythmic pattern. On Fatu Hiva, this role is often assumed by the small single-membrane drum or the tin-can drum. To the experienced eye and ear, such differences are discernible, but there is still an overall impression of fairly close similarity.

In the case of Rarotongan and Tahitian dance in this genre, the bidirectional exchange is so pervasive and long-standing, that sorting out the content and directional flow of specific artistic practices presents a definite challenge and one that calls for in-depth research into the history and nature of that borrowing. Lawrence (1992) has opened the door to that research with her recent article questioning a Tahitian origin for this dance, and undoubtedly more clues to the historical development of this genre will be offered in the future.

In his publication *Cook Islands Drums*, Cook Islander musician Jon Jonassen (1991b) viewed this interaction as predominantly a "one-sided flow of culture into Tahiti" and offered important examples of specific events that stimulated exchange during the 1960s and 1970s. However, he did not take into account the longer history of cultural sharing and the absence of a total transplantation of Cook Islander musical culture to Tahiti. Tahitians, just like Cook Islanders, were selective in what they bor-



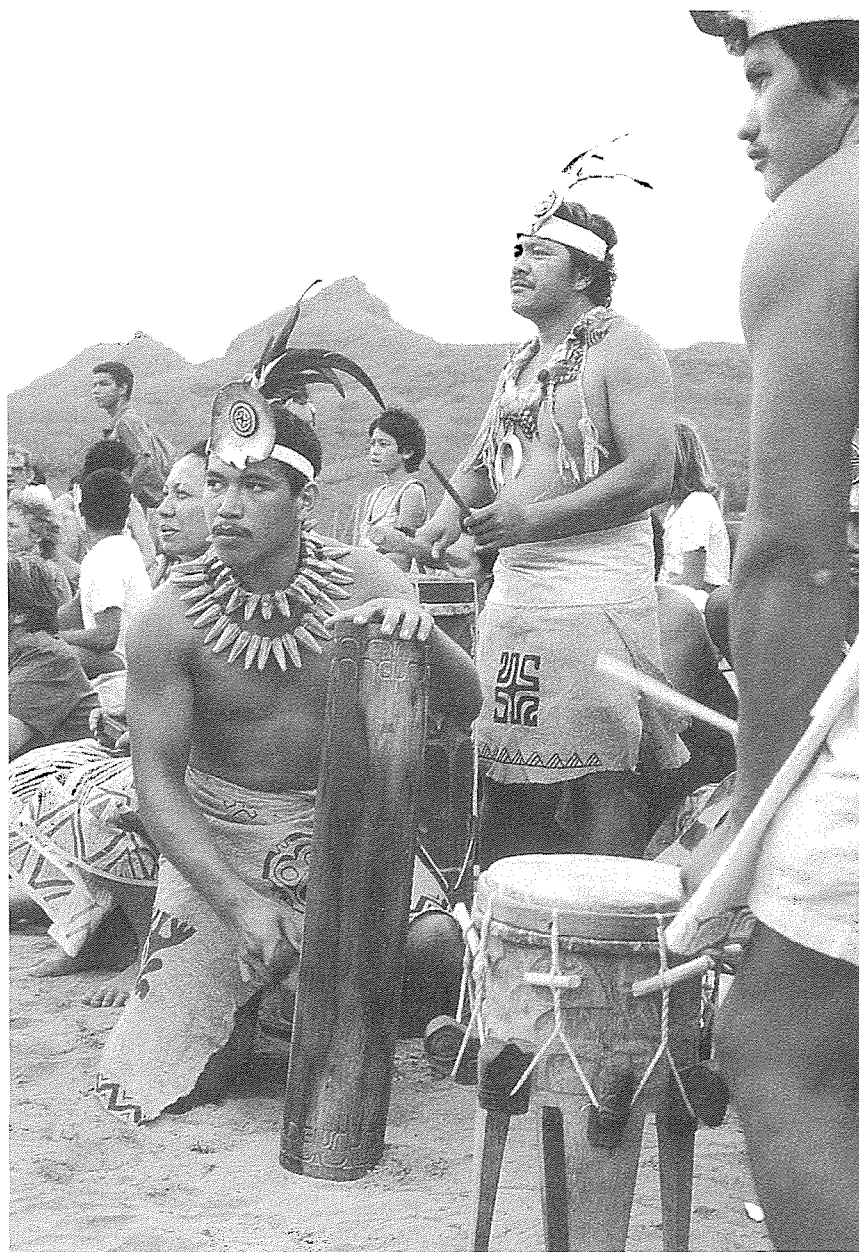


FIGURE 2. *Tapiriata* drummers from Fatu Hiva play Tahitian-style drums but incorporate Marquesan visual motifs in their costumes (Fatu Hiva delegation to the Festival of Marquesan Arts, June 1989). (*Jane Moulin*)

rowed and what they retained. Jonassen attributed the differences to imperfections in the transmission process. Others might view them not as accidents, but as deliberate choices representing statements of a culture-specific aesthetic. Nevertheless, three general statements may be made: exchange in this genre is diverse in the elements involved; this exchange is not new; and there are noticeable differences between the Cook Island and Tahitian forms, even though these are most apparent to those familiar with the tradition.

### MERGING IDENTITIES

Openly expressed problems with borrowing first surfaced in the 1980s. Perhaps the strongest public censure occurred in 1985, when the Cook Islands delegation to the Festival of Pacific Arts in Tahiti (1985) prefaced their performance with a pointed reference to the importance of properly attributing dance origins, but there had been earlier inklings of discontent as well. In the early 1980s, for example, a Cook Islander attending a lecture-demonstration in Honolulu challenged the origin of a Tahitian *'ōte'a* dance that was presented. His assertions were well founded. It is well known that Cook Islanders were influential culture exporters during the 1950s, a time when many Cook Islanders came to French Polynesia to work the phosphate mines on the island of Makatea in the Tuamotus. Several songs that were popular in Tahiti in the 1970s supposedly date from this period. Another significant wave of repertoire—and the one directly associated with the contested *'ōte'a*—had come to Tahiti in 1972–73, when Paulette Vienot formed the Royal Tahitian Dancers specifically to tour overseas and attract tourist business for her travel agency. The details of this borrowing phase are particularly interesting.

Paulette, who is of Tahitian-French descent, had definite ideas about what would make a good performance product. She was attracted to Cook Island dance, where the energetic, strongly accented, often athletic movements of the men provided a heightened excitement not present in Tahitian male dancing of the time. Cook Island female dancing, however, was less punctuated and vigorous than its Tahitian equivalent, the women were generally shorter in stature, and, in Paulette's estimation, not as strikingly beautiful as their Tahitian counterparts. Paulette decided to form a group that would combine what she felt were the best traits of both cultures—the strength and vigor of Cook Island male dancing with

the beauty and vitality of Tahitian female dancing. She engaged the services of Turepu Turepu, one of Rarotonga's most prominent dance directors and choreographers. He came to Tahiti, bringing with him several dancers and a representative repertoire of Cook Island music and dance.<sup>7</sup> Turepu chose the program content and participated fully at rehearsals, he and his dancers carefully teaching the drumming patterns, movements, and songs to the Tahitian musicians and dancers. On return from their highly successful overseas tour in 1973, the majority of the touring company—including some Cook Island men<sup>8</sup>—joined Paulette's local dance group, and the songs and dances performed on tour became part of the regular repertoire of the group Tahiti Nui.

For the young man who brought up the issue of dance origin, though, the question was not one of an academic curiosity in tracing repertoire and cross-cultural influences. He felt that Tahitians were stealing Cook Island material and failing to acknowledge the source of the pieces they subsequently presented as Tahitian.

In Paulette's defense, it must be stated that the concert posters and programs for the tour very clearly billed the group as "The Royal Tahitian Dancers and the Rarotongans." Moreover, I am not convinced that the tour's repertoire was "stolen" from the Cooks. The choreographer, who was getting no financial help from his own government and little artistic support from his own Islanders at that time, voluntarily chose to teach the Tahitians and, together with his dancers, was paid a fair wage in exchange for his expertise and services. One might ask, did Tahitians steal the repertoire, or did the Cook Islanders sell it? These thorny questions of relinquished ownership and diminished cultural control will continue, because the same potential exists in any lesson situation wherein a teacher shares repertoire and cultural information with outsiders to the tradition. Yet, the young man was correct on one very important point: for every concert program that clearly stated Rarotongan involvement, one could legitimately point to a commercial Tahitian recording that included Cook Islands songs without proper credit. Considering the more general picture, a significant amount of downright pilfering was taking place. For Jonassen, the proper word is cultural plagiarism (1991a).

Additional concerns exist. Since the early 1980s, an effort has been made by some Cook Islanders associated with Brigham Young University in Lā'ie, Hawai'i, to establish a Cook Island village as part of the well-known Polynesian Cultural Center there, that is, to have Cook Island cul-

ture represented in an important international tourist venue (Stover 1994, 11–12). This request has been repeatedly rejected, mainly because “Cook Island music and dance are just like Tahitian and we already have a Tahitian village.”

As with the case of the recordings, the problem here is not only one of cultural property but also one of cultural identity. The borrowing of cultural property has been going on for decades, even centuries. What is different now is that widespread audio distribution and international cultural dissemination via touring companies, cultural centers, and electronic media take that material to a larger group of people, most of whom have no cultural framework for judging the “authenticity” of what is presented and are not familiar with the subtle clues that Islanders rely on. In this kind of situation, identities can become blurred. From the presenter’s point of view, in this case the Polynesian Cultural Center, the identities had *merged*—to the point where distinctions simply were not readily apparent.

#### VIEWING THE PACIFIC FROM A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

On the one hand this problem of merging identities might seem like a purely idiosyncratic response concerning two small Pacific Island nations. Viewed from a wider perspective, however, it is not an isolated case at all.

Trend analyst John Naisbitt has presented this broader view in his recent book entitled *Global Paradox: The Bigger the World Economy, the More Powerful Its Smallest Players* (1994). Although Naisbitt did not address the arts directly, many of the ideas presented in his work have direct application to the topic of cultural borrowing and can provide a possible framework for analyzing both the current situation and probable directions for the near future of the arts.

Naisbitt believes that it is becoming increasingly difficult—even impossible—for a country to function as an individual economic entity. The world is moving overwhelmingly toward economic alliances and a truly global economy. Such a movement has repercussions for the performing arts, for as Naisbitt put it, the more people are bound together economically, the more they want to be independent politically and culturally. In other words, the more people integrate, the more they feel a need to differentiate and to claim the freedom to assert their own distinctiveness. To him, the current move to political independence and self-rule that is evi-

dent all around the globe, occurring even as major economic alliances are being established, is the visible sign of the global paradox. The unbundling of the Soviet Union, or—closer to home—independence for the Cook Islands, the current sovereignty movement in Hawai'i, and France's problems with its Pacific territories are all examples of the paradox in action. A major move toward fundamental changes in trade relationships is uniting the European Community even as people in the Pyrénées mountains between France and Spain have claimed Andorra an independent nation of 47,000 inhabitants (Naisbitt 1994, 10, 20, 9).

Allied with this move to smaller political units on the one hand and larger economic blocks on the other is the growing importance of language. "Minority languages all over the world are achieving a new status as people hold more tightly to their heritage and use this as a ballast to the creation of a larger, more economically homogeneous world" (Naisbitt 1994, 51). Once again, the evidence is obvious among Pacific nations: Polynesian language programs have been established in New Zealand and Hawai'i; Tahiti has pushed successfully to have Tahitian language taught in schools; and the Marquesans have subsequently refused to study compulsory Tahitian rather than their own tongue. Because vocal music stands at the very heart of Pacific performing traditions, the issue of language bears directly on music and dance performance. Language and language fluency affect song text content and ultimately mold the rhythmic and melodic features of the music as well as movement characteristics of the text-related choreography.<sup>9</sup>

Language is not only a stabilizing factor in a changing world, but also a means of maintaining distinct identities. Naisbitt referred to this move to greater differentiation as the "new tribalism," the belief in a fidelity to one's own kind as defined by ethnicity, language, culture, religion, or even profession. His point is that the global nature of economic and technological change has strengthened long-standing identities, not separated people from them. In a world of blue jeans, T-shirts, Dunhill cigarettes, and the CD player, the bond of language, religion, or ethnic heritage provides an important sense of group unity and reinforces a people's sense of belonging. According to Naisbitt, "The more universal we become, the more tribal we act" (1994, 23, 25, 26).

Separateness and the maintenance of distinction are increasingly important elements in Polynesia, even in the face of such developments as Jawaiian music or Tahitian reggae. More appropriately, perhaps these

very forms should be viewed as demonstrations of cultural differentiation—of Islanders localizing what has become a global music—rather than seen only as examples of the culture becoming more externally influenced. Considering the length of accelerated contact in Polynesia and the substantial amount of external pressure brought to bear on indigenous music, people should stand in awe of its continuity, tenacity, and amazing adaptability instead of shaking their heads over loss or change.

While examples of borrowing can be listed for every Pacific country, it is probably more instructive to consider how Islanders deal with these importations. On the island of Rotuma, Vilsoni Hereniko described the main characteristics of Rotuman dance and its music as being “assimilation and adaptation.” Indeed, Rotuman dances include the *mak Rarotonga*, *mak Samoa*, and action songs with Māori tunes, among others. But perhaps the most interesting example is the *tautoga*, which many Rotumans regard as their only traditional dance genre. The dance and its music are organized into three, clearly delineated sections: the *sua* (literally ‘to sing’), the *tiap hi* (song and dance with vocables known as *hi*), and the *tiap forau* (foreign song and dance). This last may incorporate Rarotongan, Tongan, Samoan, or even western dance movements; texts may include English or Fijian words (Tausie 1977, 120, 135–139, 130–131).

Such absorption of a foreign dance or song is certainly not unusual in the Pacific. What is unique in this case is the way it is juxtaposed onto another genre—one originally viewed as a chiefly dance and still performed to demonstrate honor and respect for the audience. The musical and movement elements of old and new are not intermingled; the old retains its particular qualities, while the new exists as a separate entity with its own musical and movement characteristics and its own protocol. Once again, this may be viewed as an external force watering down the original, or as society’s way of accommodating a desire for the new while maintaining and highlighting the distinction between old and new.

Hawai‘i also maintains separateness, but by different means. Today, dance and its associated music are divided into two broad categories—*hula kahiko*, literally “old or ancient *hula*” accompanied by chant and indigenous musical instruments, and *hula ‘auana*, a term widely used to distinguish a modern composition performed to acculturated songs accompanied by imported instruments.

Contrary to what the terminology implies, the chants and movements

for most *hula kahiko* are not really “ancient.” A look at the older compositions in this style, reveals very few that date prior to the 1880s.<sup>10</sup> In the late-nineteenth century many of these very compositions were considered *hula ku‘i*—a term that set them apart as compositions incorporating new traditions. The important point here is that while Hawai‘i acknowledges an older style (in itself a blend) and a modern style (with a separate set of more recent blended influences), both of these are identifiably Hawaiian, each representing its own age along with the aesthetics and cultural dynamics appropriate to that particular time. The type of modern hula perpetuated in Waikīkī, for example, appeals to the tourist market precisely because it is an icon of “Hawaiinness.” The current resurgence of interest in “ancient” *hula* and chant, which grew out of the Hawaiian renaissance of the 1970s, has become one more definable point along the continuum of time.

Of interest in the case of Hawaiian music and dance, however, is the absence of acknowledged, widespread blending from other Pacific cultures. Tahitian, Māori, Samoan, and Tongan dance are easily found on O‘ahu, but are recognized and appreciated as such. Although Tatar argued that influences from Tahitian and Samoan dance were incorporated in the 1960s and assimilated during the late 1970s and 1980s as part of the move toward a larger Polynesian identity (1987, 23), these changes appear more subtle than the overt adoption of foreign music and dance found in other areas, such as Rotuma. Moreover, in Hawai‘i foreign genres are not juxtaposed as a separate but complementary part of the *hula* composition, as in the Rotuman *tautoga*.

There is a feeling among many *hula* people that one should not tamper with the past. Obviously, this does not mean that change does not occur, for clear evidence to the contrary is readily apparent in both “ancient” and “modern” styles.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, an expressed cultural value is placed on consistency, and this ideal undoubtedly affects the very nature of the transformations that occur. The *hula* competitions and festivals that are integral to music and dance performance in Hawai‘i today are at times criticized as fostering a relentless search for the new, in order to attract the judges’ attention. Yet some in the *hula* community feel that the widespread participation and attendance of a range of recognized experts, live statewide television broadcast of the events, and certain very conservative judges all tend to serve as watchdogs protecting against repeated cases of stepping too far out of line. The venue for presenting innovative elements

is a very public one, and performances are open to the critique and judgment of the larger community. In such a situation, the role of technology becomes an important one—not only as a force of change, but perhaps also as a means of slowing the rate of extreme change by bringing performance before a wider audience.

But are there perhaps other forces at work in this need for distinctions? Going back to John Naisbitt's paradox, it is worth noting that one entire chapter in his book is devoted to "Travel: [The] Globalization of the World's Largest Industry." His analysis of the industry from a global perspective offers information of interest to those involved in Pacific Island arts and culture.

Stating that tourism employs 1 in every 9 workers worldwide, Naisbitt has estimated that travel and tourism will create 144 million more jobs between now and the year 2005. Not only is it presently the world's largest industry, but it will continue to be so. Naisbitt credited this to telecommunications and global economic interaction. "The more exposure we have to other cultures, languages and landscapes, the stronger our desire to experience them firsthand." Furthermore, recognizing "the world's appetite for experiencing environments and cultures other than their own is a golden opportunity"; for many countries, tourism is or will become by far the biggest source of income. Surely small islands of the Pacific with limited natural resources but favorable climates and generally positive world images will be among the places that hold great potential for tourist development (Naisbitt 1994, 104, 103, 131).

What happens to the arts in such an environment? The arts and tourism have not always made a good marriage; in fact, tourism is often maligned as the destroyer of culture in the Pacific. According to Naisbitt, however, the bigger and more competitive travel becomes, the more each group will want to present its culture to tourists as authentically distinctive. The more integrated the world becomes, the more its peoples will seek to differentiate their experiences (1994, 10, 20, 103). Music and dance may not necessarily be more "authentic" as a result of growth in the tourism industry, but they will be immediately recognizable by whatever icons are established. Hawai'i is a prime example of that principle in action. The issue of concern in Hawai'i perhaps centers around who is in control of creating that icon.

Also, there is a slight difference in the emerging "new" tourism.



J R Brent Ritchie stated in the *World Travel and Tourism Review*, “there is increasing demand for tourism in which visitors are permitted to observe and participate in local events and lifestyles in a nonartificial manner.” Relating this to the potential role of tourism in actively encouraging cultural diversity, he continued, “Supporting this are efforts to move away from a mass tourism approach to one in which more specialized experiences are developed and offered in a more personal and culturally sensitive manner” (1991, 152). One would hope that nonartificial, culturally sensitive presentations of music and dance would be right at the top of the list for the new tourist. That goal is not impossible, but it does require education to insure all of the players (hotels, entertainment managers, tour operators, performers, and audiences) realize that expectations are changing and a new set of rules will apply.

Other trends of interest to the Pacific center around a growth in the organization of special international events as a way for countries “to promote goodwill, introduce themselves to the world, and generate enormous profits for the host city/country.” Naisbitt said that in the years ahead, we should “expect an explosion of festivals—music, film, art, ideas—sporting events, historic commemorations, fairs—anything that will promote tourism” (1994, 142). Certainly, this phase is already developing all around. Moreover, these international festivals reinforce cultural separation not only for tourists, but also for participants. For example, Tahitian performers attending international, Pacific-wide events—even as they embrace a broad identity of Pacific Islander—are generally impressed with how different they are from their neighbors, not how similar to them.

Surely this growing economic need to establish and maintain cultural differentiation has fueled many of the resentments over borrowing. In the contemporary Pacific new political and economic realities call for Islanders to adapt to increased self-government and to establish new avenues of financial resources. In this new environment, separate, unique, and easily recognizable identities have become increasingly important, both in making political statements and in competing for the international tourist market. The problem with borrowing is that it tends to blur these lines of cultural separation and uniqueness, making it difficult for Islanders to clearly define their musical cultures—particularly for the outside world.

## CULTURAL ARTIFACTS

Are issues of economics and cultural identity the sole factors molding Islander reactions to borrowing? Is it possible that fundamentally different attitudes toward change have also contributed to current misunderstandings?

In exploring this question, I return once again to the case of the Tahitian 'ōte'a. The most striking feature in its development over the last twenty years is the extensive and rapid change that has occurred. In Tahiti, an artistic climate clearly exists in which innovations in this genre are not only favored, they are savored. The quest for the new and different—even the shockingly different—is the primary force shaping Tahitian 'ōte'a dance today.

Constant creativity requires fuel to keep it going, and over the last thirty-five years Tahitians have drawn predominantly from two sources of inspiration. One involves a selective dipping into the past, wherein isolated features of ancient culture are reworked in new ways but ascribed to tradition. In a present-oriented culture such as Tahiti's, however, "tradition" is sometimes a cheap word and one easily applied to even nonindigenous features. A group of visiting Tahitian musicians performing in Hawai'i in 1993,<sup>12</sup> for example, featured a previously unknown jew's harp consisting of a coconut with a length of bamboo inserted as a mouthpiece and announced that this was an ancient type of instrument used by their ancestors. If so, it has completely escaped over two hundred years of written and artifactual documentation—in Tahiti or elsewhere in Polynesia. Such claims of previously unrevealed access to past practice become increasingly hard to believe in the Tahitian context, for only some group directors have done the research necessary to substantiate the statements they make, and few see reason to identify their sources. One director, when queried about the origin of a particular "traditional" dance movement and faced with the probability that this was a recent choreographic addition, sidestepped any need for historical verification and cheerfully resolved the dilemma with "Oh well, that's what we call *living* tradition!"

Tahitians repeatedly turn to the arts of their neighbors as well and demonstrate a remarkable ability to incorporate ideas from a variety of musical systems, interweaving them with Tahitian elements in an endless flow of creativity and accommodation. Influences do not even have to be

from closely related musics. The winning musicians at the 1993 summer competitions in Tahiti, for example, included didjeridoos in their presentation. The preamble to the 1994 and 1995 General Regulations for the Heiva competitions formally acknowledges—and even encourages—the practice of looking elsewhere for ideas, particularly within the Polynesian triangle:

*Des traditions polynésiennes concernant la chorégraphie et les compositions musicales ne sont plus vivantes chez nous, oubliées dans la nuit des temps. Elles ont pu être conservées sous d'autres cieux du triangle polynésien (AO TEA ROA—HAWAII—RAPA NUI). Une recherche prudente est à encourager dans ce sens pour enrichir notre patrimoine.*

Some Polynesian traditions regarding choreography and musical compositions are no longer alive in our islands, forgotten in the night of time. They were able to be conserved under other skies of the Polynesian triangle (Aotearoa, Hawai'i, Rapa Nui). A prudent research in this should be encouraged in order to enrich our patrimony. (*Règlement général du concours de chants et danses traditionels*, 1994 and 1995, 1; my translation.)

A firm knowledge of historical practice, the replication of known compositions from the past, and a concern with “authenticity” are simply not important to many Tahitians in defining their culture—either to themselves or to outsiders. Whereas some cultures value persistence and continuity in tradition, Tahitians value change—often for the pure sake of change.

This is not the case for all other Islanders. For example, on Fatu Hiva a preference for replication, with its corresponding slower rate of change, meant that fifty-year-old Marquesan women were able to demonstrate *tapiriata* movements alongside their thirty-year-old daughters in a refreshing generational interaction not possible in the Tahitian context.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, these dances were the same as those performed by the teenagers of the village two days earlier. Thus, although Marquesans might incorporate innovations in certain aspects of performance, such as costumes and instrumentation, the bulk of the repertoire was retained—and over a significant period. The exhibition of such an approach to performance, especially when found in both imported genres like the *tapiriata* and indigenous ones, provides important information regarding the make-up of the Marquesan artistic personality.

In a similar way, Cook Islanders in Rarotonga in 1992 were still performing the *very same dances* taught to the Tahitians twenty years earlier.

These dances were performed by a number of different groups in tourist venues, an environment wherein one might expect to witness evidence of cultural change rather than preservation. Furthermore, one of these dances, "Tumake Tumake," was also included in the Cook Island presentation at the 1988 Festival of Pacific Arts (Townsville, Australia), a forum for which Pacific Islanders generally strive to prepare what they feel are outstanding representations of their cultures.<sup>14</sup>

Obviously, different aesthetics are at work, and they involve divergent attitudes toward change. Tahiti's neighbors are more retentive in their approach to repertoire, while Tahitians exhibit decidedly less regard for tradition in this genre. I believe that Tahitians view culture as something that is constantly created from materials at hand, a replenishable resource. Because Tahitians tend not to be deeply concerned with the past, especially the recent past, they do not look to the old-fashioned style of the Marquesan *tapiriata*, which in essence represents their own fairly recent music and dance history. Rather, they seek *new* material—in the Cook Islands and Hawai'i, in the indigenous music of the Marquesas, even among the Māori of New Zealand and the Australian Aboriginals—and they have no qualms about mixing it with their own and labeling it traditional.

The conflict comes when Tahitians, viewing art as creative, innovative, and replenishable, borrow from neighbors who view tradition as a limited cultural resource. To Cook Islanders and Marquesans, many songs and dances are attached to the past and respected as such. Usurpation of these compositions robs them of something that has definite value, something that may not be ascribed to a particular individual but which belongs to the heritage of a people as much as any physical art object. Such appropriation may be distasteful to the source island on several levels: first, the composition is taken, not given; second, transplanted songs and dances may be altered, poorly performed, and artistically offensive to the source culture; and third, the product is presented as Tahitian. Furthermore, and this affects new compositions as well as old, the cultural blurring caused by continued, widespread, and unacknowledged borrowing deprives the source culture of its uniqueness, a fact that has strong political and economic implications.

While the blurring of identities creates challenges for Islanders, tourists, and scholars, it demonstrates that deeper processes are at work and reveals how Islanders define their cultural resources, the parameters of

artistic innovation, the value attached to artistic creation, and the appropriate sources of creative inspiration. Rotumans, for example, value assimilation and adaptation as cultural attributes. Tahitians define themselves in a way that values and, indeed, requires change—constant change. For other Islanders who value history, the definition embodies minimal change and change accommodated over a longer period. In response to people who ask why Tahitians are the way they are, I would answer that their attributes are not ultimately caused by colonization or a hybridization of cultural identity—although these factors may have an influence.<sup>15</sup> Rather, a tentative conclusion at this time is that the cultural propensity to borrow, to change, to assimilate, to look outside one's culture for artistic ideas rather than to stress internal creativity is as much a cultural artifact as the shape of a fishhook or a *tapa* design. Like any artifact, it will exhibit variation from one cultural environment to another.

## TOWARD THE FUTURE

Acknowledging these differences in cultural propensity to borrow also perhaps creates a need for outsiders to redefine their view of Polynesian cultures. The traveler to Tahiti who arrives expecting to find ancient culture will be sorely disappointed. However, by viewing Tahitians as essentially creators and regarding the music and dance as art forms that are amazingly flexible in accommodating new ideas, that same person will start to appreciate the role and types of cultural borrowing that occur. Concepts of tradition, identity, and authenticity are fluid in the minds of Tahitians. Most likely, issues of copyright will ultimately decide the fine line between inspiration and appropriation, and international debate may be required to determine just how far those concepts can be stretched legally and morally. But these determinations must be made by Islanders, not imposed by outsiders.

For example, some non-Islander visitors to the 1992 Festival of Pacific Arts in Rarotonga, were surprised and perhaps even disappointed by an obvious absence of emphasis on strictly traditional music and dance. Festival events featured contemporary forms—such as an emphasis on Pacific theater groups and even an evening of Pacific popular music stars. Several delegations brought both the old and the new with them, and participants obviously enjoyed both. Yet, postfestival discussions in Honolulu indicated real points of disagreement over the original goals of the

festival and the new paths being laid. While certain non-Islanders voiced their concerns about tradition, Islanders indicated their irritation over outsider definitions of their arts. Some people might argue that “authenticity” is an externally imposed concept, but I question whether limiting island performances to a fixed model of traditional music is perhaps a form of cultural colonialism. Imagine a typical European’s reaction at being told he or she could not perform music written after the time of Mozart or Beethoven or even Debussy. The thought would be ludicrous. Why, then, should it be any different for Pacific Islanders? Distinctions can exist without the arts being frozen in time. The new and the old can coexist in the Pacific as they do elsewhere—one does not threaten the other.

What does the future hold in this world where Islanders are moving forward into new artistic exploration that draws from many sources and where the outside world and global economic forces are pressuring them to remain unique? Surely many highly innovative ideas will come forth from this immediate period of experimentation—not only in the Pacific, but around the globe. But as Thomas (1981) aptly demonstrated in his article on acculturated music in the Pacific, these new ideas and new forms will not be totally unrelated to the past but rather grafted onto what the society defines as its essential core of meaning. The words of award-winning author Ann Cameron, although written specifically to address the need for ethnic diversity in American children’s fiction, embody an image many Islanders may share, “Tradition is not a box we are stuck in, it is roots we grow from” (1992, 21).

Clearly, these roots will maintain and even strengthen differences—both now and in the future. If Naisbitt is correct, territory as a defining concept will become meaningless; language, religion, and ethnic heritage are the bonds out of which new communities will be created (1994, 25). As ethnic or regional groups search for musical icons that will differentiate them from their neighbors, knowledge of earlier practices will be called for, and the role of solid research in tracing the artistic history of a people will become ever more important. Electronic documentation will increase and local archival collections will grow as communities move toward greater self-awareness and the need to share their current practice with future generations. Festivals of all kinds will grow in both number and economic importance; prominent among these will be arts festivals, which will highlight not only historical works but also contemporary per-

formers and composers. These cultural attractions will draw both residents and those tourists wanting to extend their knowledge beyond the electronic environment to explore the arts and cultures of the world first-hand. Technology may give crystal-clear sounds and images, but it is hard to imagine that television and multimedia will successfully replace the combined sensations that are integral to the unmediated experience of witnessing Pacific music and dance in person—the spontaneity of an audience reaction, the smell of fragrant oils and flowers, and the caress of tropical breezes in the night air.

In closing, it is appropriate to consider Naisbitt's final comments about the kind of leadership that will be called for in this new relationship of parts to the whole. "The new leadership required in the world will be to encourage and facilitate contact, creativity and the sorting out of what will remain local and what will be global, what will remain tribal and what will be universal" (Naisbitt 1994, 274). In such a climate, issues of cultural origin, ownership, and authority will come repeatedly to the fore and local, regional, and global boundaries will regularly be tested and contested. There is a call for everyone—as performers, arts presenters, teachers, scholars, and government officials—to encourage and facilitate the transitions that will occur. Artistic performance will not only reflect these transitions, it can help to *form* them. Music and dance are able to lead the way to very specific demarcations of group identity. Yet, via the performances of others, they may provide sufficient exposure to differing artistic systems and cultural values that pitfalls of ethnocentrism can be countered and avoided.

What's mine is yours? Perhaps. But then again, perhaps not.

## Notes

1 The conference was the First Joint Meeting of the Musicological Society of Australia and the New Zealand Musicological Society, held in Auckland, 6–10 July 1994.

2 An outstanding example in the Pacific is the case of the Hawaiian renaissance, most particularly the important role that music played in providing the initial impetus for the growth of this movement during the 1970s. What began as basically a resurgence of interest in Hawaiian music, spread to encompass dance, language study, and eventually Hawaiian culture in general. The links between

this direct, active involvement with Hawaiian culture, initiated by music, and the current political issues of Hawaiian sovereignty and self-determination are obvious ones that underscore music's potential to lead a culture and instigate significant social change.

3 Hereniko previously published under the name Vilsoni Tausie.

4 Although I focus on these three particular islands, readers should be aware that the music and dance styles I discuss are performed throughout the Cook Islands and French Polynesia.

5 What has historically been a unidirectional pattern is slowly starting to change as Tahitians become increasingly interested in and attracted to the artistic dimensions of Marquesan culture. This change has in turn raised serious concerns in the Marquesan community (Moulin 1994a, 12–13). Although an early attempt to incorporate Marquesan dance material in Tahitian performances was apparent in the 1985 Festival of Pacific Arts in Tahiti, Marquesan artistic influence and presence in Tahiti is primarily a post-1985 phenomenon.

6 Tahitians place this change in the period of the mid-1950s (Moulin 1979, 94). According to the well-known Aitutaki musician Ota Joseph, this change was already complete by 1959–60 (Laird 1982, 29). The practice of using the tin can may have lingered in certain situations, however. Some Tahitian hotel shows apparently incorporated this instrument as late as 1963 (Barbara Smith, personal communication, May 1995).

7 Turepu also returned to Tahiti in 1974 to work with the Royal Tahitian Dancers in preparing for a South American tour to Peru and Chile. He remained only a brief period, and his input at rehearsals was directed more to perfecting previously taught repertoire than to teaching new material.

8 At least three Rarotongan dancers stayed in Tahiti after the tour was over; one, Tom Mariri, is still there, over twenty years later, actively performing and serving as dance director for Tahiti's premier dance group, Heikura Nui—winners of first prize in the Heiva competitions in 1993, 1994, and 1995.

9 Kaepler (1976, 202, 214) argued that the increased use of narrative dance movements in Hawai'i during the late nineteenth century was directly related to changing patterns of language use and a decline in Hawaiian language fluency.

10 Kaepler's landmark work *Hula Pahu* (1993) provides a detailed discussion of the small body of older, extant, sacred *hula* compositions.

11 Tatar (1987) traced this path of change throughout the twentieth century, as Hawaiians adjusted to the needs and changing tastes of tourists.

12 The group O Tahiti E performed at the Polynesian Cultural Center in October 1993.

13 Fieldwork in 1989 was conducted as part of the Territorial Survey of Oceanic Music and was funded by UNESCO, the Archive of Māori and Pacific



Music (University of Auckland), Brigham Young University (Lā‘ie, Hawai‘i), the University of California at Santa Barbara, and a special Pacific Music Grant from Hawai‘i Loa College (Kane‘ohe, Hawai‘i).

14 These same dances (including “Thunderball,” “Tumake,” and several *kaparima*) appeared in the Cook Island concert given as part of the musicology conference in Auckland (July 1994). The performers were all Cook Islander immigrants living in the Auckland area. In May 1995, one of these *kaparima* songs, with slightly modified movements, also appeared in Cook Islands National Arts Theater performances celebrating the arrival of the Polynesian voyaging canoes in Honolulu.

15 Kaeppler (1978, 160) pointed out that drawings from Cook’s voyage show Austral Islands drums being used on a Tahitian *marae*, confirming that such borrowing has a long history.

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*Abstract*

Ever-increasing opportunities for artistic contact and interaction between music and dance cultures of the Pacific create new potentials for significant artistic exchange. This paper considers three eastern Polynesian cultures (Marquesas, Society Islands, Cook Islands) and explores the nature and content of the artistic borrowing that occurs. Although certainly not a new practice, such borrowing has contributed to growing tensions in the region—tensions that relate to questions of “authenticity” and cultural appropriation. This paper expands the discussion to a global framework and examines artistic exchange in relation to the growing political and economic importance of cultural distinctiveness, particularly when defining that culture to outsiders. Predictions are offered about the role music and dance will play as Pacific nations determine the boundaries of local, regional, and global culture.

**KEYWORDS:** cultural identity, French Polynesia, Cook Islands, music, dance, cultural appropriation, tourism